



## What is it?

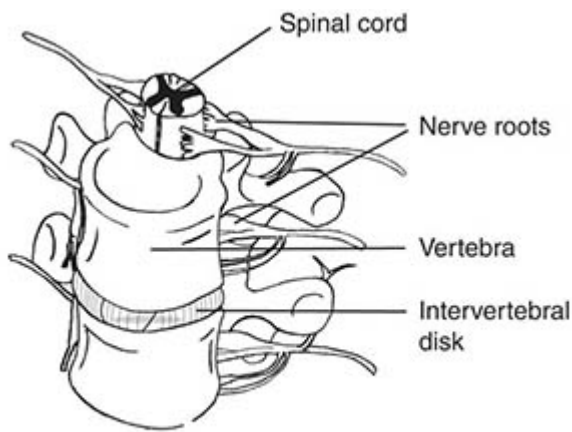
### Points To Remember About Spinal Stenosis

- Spinal stenosis occurs when the spine is narrowed in one or more areas. This puts pressure on the spinal cord and nerves to cause pain.
- The impact of the disease varies from person to person.
- Spinal stenosis may be treated by medications, braces, or surgery.
- Your doctor may also recommend that you limit your activity and exercise. Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program.

In people with spinal stenosis, the spine is narrowed in one or more areas:

- The space at the center of the spine.
- The canals where nerves branch out from the spine.
- The space between the bones of the spine.

This narrowing puts pressure on the spinal cord and nerves and can cause pain.



**Section of the Spine**

## Who gets it?

Spinal stenosis is most common in men and women over 50 years old. Younger people who were born with a narrow spinal canal or who hurt their spines may also get spinal stenosis.

## What are the symptoms?

There may be no symptoms of spinal stenosis, or symptoms may appear slowly and get worse over time. Signs include:

- Pain in the neck or back.
- Numbness, weakness, cramping, or pain in the arms or legs.
- Pain going down the leg.
- Foot problems.

A serious type of spinal stenosis occurs when there is pressure on nerves in the lower back. You should call your doctor if you have any of these symptoms:

- Loss of control of the bowel or bladder.
- Problems having sex.
- Pain, weakness, or loss of feeling in one or both legs.

## What causes it?

Spinal stenosis could be caused by a number of things, including:

- Getting older, which can cause changes in the spine. This is the most common cause.
- Arthritis can affect the spine in some cases.

- Inherited conditions, which you are born with, can affect the spine. For example, you might have been born with a small spinal canal or a curved spine.
- Tumors of the spine.
- Injuries.
- Paget's disease (a disease that affects the bones).
- Too much fluoride in the body.
- Calcium deposits on ligaments that run along the spine.

## Is there a test?

To diagnose spinal stenosis, your doctor may do the following:

- Ask you about your medical history.
- Give you a physical exam.
- Take pictures of your spine.

## How is it treated?

Spinal stenosis may be treated by:

- **Medications** to reduce swelling or pain.
- **Braces** for your lower back.
- **Alternative treatments**, such as chiropractic treatment and acupuncture. More research is needed on the value of these treatments.
- **Surgery**, if you have:
  - Symptoms that get in the way of walking.
  - Problems with bowel or bladder function.
  - Problems with your nervous system.

## Who treats it?

Because spinal stenosis has many causes and symptoms, you may require treatment from different doctors such as:

- Rheumatologists, who treat arthritis and other diseases of the bones, joints, and muscles.
- Neurologists and neurosurgeons, who treat diseases of the nervous system.
- Orthopedic surgeons, who treat problems with the bones, joints, and ligaments.
- Physical therapists, who help improve function.

# Living With It

Your doctor may recommend the following to help you live with spinal stenosis:

- Limits on your activity.
- Exercise and/or physical therapy. Talk to your doctor about an exercise program before beginning.

## For More Info

### **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

Drugs@FDA at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. Drugs@FDA is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics**

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

### **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Institutes of Health**

Website: <https://www.ninds.nih.gov>

### **American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons**

Website: <https://www.aaos.org>

### **American College of Rheumatology**

Website: <https://www.rheumatology.org>

### **North American Spine Society**

Website: <https://www.spine.org>

### **Spondylitis Association of America**

Website: <https://www.spondylitis.org>

### **Arthritis Foundation**

Website: <https://www.arthritis.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at [NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov).

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)

## **Join a Clinical Trial**

[Find a Clinical Trial](#)

## **View/Download/Order Publications**

[Spinal Stenosis, Easy-to-Read Fast Facts](#)

[Spinal Stenosis, Questions and Answers](#)

[Back Pain, Handout on Health](#)

[Back Pain, Easy-to-Read Fast Facts](#)